

3. On the Occurrence of the Barbary Sheep in Egypt. By
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Society.

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Although Geoffroy St.-Hilaire is stated to have brought to Paris a specimen of the Barbary Sheep (*Ovis tragelaphus*), obtained near the city of Cairo (Savigny, Description de l'Égypte, vol. ii. p. 742 (1812), Mammif. pl. vii. fig. 2 (1809)), I have always supposed that some mistake had occurred as to this locality¹, as until recently I knew of no modern authority for its being met with, except in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis. As regards Tripoli I have no certain information, but I have been informed that a Wild Sheep is found in the interior of that country.

Last summer, therefore, I was rather surprised when I was told by Major Talbot, R.E., of the Intelligence Department, who had lately visited the frontier of Egypt at Wady Halfa, that several specimens of a Wild Sheep had lately been obtained on the banks of the Nile in that district. Major Talbot was kind enough to refer me to Capt. J. G. Dunning, who had been for some time stationed at Wady Halfa, for further particulars, and Capt. Dunning, at my request, supplied me with the following notes:—

“During the summer of 1890 a herd of some 13 Sheep, according to native accounts, were continually seen in the neighbourhood of Semneh, some forty miles south of Wady Halfa on the Nile, and on the east bank of that river. Several of these Sheep were shot by natives and brought into Halfa, the head sent from Assouan and the horns now at Mr. Rowland Ward's belonging to two of those shot.

“These Sheep had not been seen in that neighbourhood before, and have not been seen since, and it is possible that the drought which obtained in the Atbai very generally from the years 1886-91 forced these animals down to the Nile, as the water-holes and pools became dried up.

“They are supposed to come from the neighbourhood of Gebel Hisse (or Isse), some 60 miles to the S.W. of the Elba mountains. This mountain of Hisse or Isse is presumably the head of the Wady Allaki, which falls into the Nile some 40 miles north of Korosko.”

Capt. Dunning, moreover, informed me that he was expecting to receive from Assouan a head of this Sheep, which would be at my service for examination. This, I am sorry to say, has never reached me, and, as Capt. Dunning has gone to Uganda, I have not

¹ There seems to be no doubt that the Barbary Sheep is represented on some of the ancient monuments of Egypt (see *Ammotragus tragelaphus* in Dr. R. Hartmann's article on the Animals figured by the Ancient Egyptians on their sculptures, in Brugsch's Zeitschr. f. Ägyptische Sprache u. Alterthums, ii. p. 23), but many non-Egyptian animals are figured in these drawings.

been able to communicate with him about it. But I have examined a pair of horns at Mr. Rowland Ward's belonging to Major Lloyd, of the South Staffordshire Regiment (alluded to by Capt. Dunning), and have no doubt that they are those of a young male of *Ovis tragelaphus*. I think, therefore, we may assume it as proved that the present range of the Barbary Sheep extends through the interior of Tripoli into the southern mountains of Egypt.

But I have two pieces of evidence which tend to show that the Barbary Sheep in bygone years existed also in the more northern mountains of Eastern Egypt between the Nile and the Red Sea. Mr. E. N. Buxton has shown me a large and well-preserved right horn of the Barbary Sheep, which he picked up in Feb. 1893 on the lower slopes of the mountains to the north of the Wadi Medisa, during his journey from Keneh towards Jimsah¹. In such a dry climate it is impossible to say how long this horn may have lain there, but it is evidently comparatively recent.

Again, as Mr. Buxton has kindly pointed out to me, Prof. Schweinfurth, in an article "On the unknown Land of Egypt" (of which I have only seen a translation), speaks of the Barbary Sheep as being even now "frequent" in the Wadi Scietun, which debouches on the Nile below the town of Achmim (or Echmim) between Siout and Kenah. There is said to be a cistern in this valley about 60 kilometres N.W. of Achmim, to which these animals resort.

It is therefore by no means impossible that, as Geoffroy St.-Hilaire has stated, an example of *Ovis tragelaphus* may have been killed near Cairo at the beginning of the present century.

4. Note on the Breeding of the Surinam Water-Toad (*Pipa surinamensis*) in the Society's Reptile-House. By P. L. SCLATER, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.S., Secretary to the Society.

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When I visited the Gardens of the Royal Zoological Society of Amsterdam in May last, as I have already mentioned on a former occasion (see P. Z. S. 1894, p. 456), I observed with great interest seven living examples of the Surinam Toad in one of the hot-water tanks, being the first individuals of this remarkable Batrachian that I had ever seen alive. Noting the interest that I took in these creatures, our excellent corresponding member Mr. F. E. Blaauw, who was in my company on the occasion, most kindly offered to endeavour to obtain for the Gardens of this Society some

¹ See Mr. Flower's map, P. R. G. S. n. s. ix. p. 730 (1867).